Emulation and Erasure: Eison, Ninshō, and the Gyōki Cult

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INTRODUCTION

UNDER the dual leadership of Eison 叡尊 (or Eizon; 1201–1290) in Nara and Ninshō 忍性 (1217–1303) in Kamakura, the Shingon Ritsu 真言律 movement rose to prominence in the Kamakura period (1185–1333). They did so by restoring temples from Kantō to Kyūshū, by spreading the precepts among monks and nuns, warrior and courtier leaders, and commoners alike, and by performing subjugation rites against the Mongols as well as other state-protecting and esoteric rituals. Of particular interest here is the start of their wide-ranging social welfare activities, which came to include providing charitable relief to beggars, orphans, lepers, and other *hinin* 非人 (outcasts),[1] maintaining funerary grounds for commoners, and such public works as constructing roads, bridges, ports, shelters, and medical facilities.

The study of Eison has been greatly facilitated by the detailed autobiography he composed late in his life, the *Kongō busshi Eison kanjin gakushōki* 金剛仏子叡尊感身学正記 (hereafter *Gakushōki*). However, his most renowned disciple, Ninshō, left behind few writings. Scholars therefore often turn to Eison's writings for glimpses into Ninshō's character, and the most widely cited passages are entries in Eison's autobiography for the ninth month of 1239 and early

[1] The term *hinin*—literally "non-person"—has been widely used to refer to various groups of people in medieval Japan without fixed status or engaged in activities considered "polluting," including itinerant entertainers, prisoners and executioners, and those handling human or animal remains. But for Eison's group, the term primarily referred to the impoverished, to lepers and the gravely ill or disabled, and to abandoned children or elderly people (Oishio 1995, p. 245). See also Hosokawa 1994 and Matsuo 1998a.

1240. These passages, framed in a dialogue concerning Ninshō's taking formal ordination under Eison, describe Ninshō's earlier informal tonsure at his mother's deathbed request, then his resolve to compose Mañjuśrī images and enshrine them at *hinin* communities for the thirteenth anniversary of her death. Significantly, this account marks the introduction of both Ninshō and the Mañjuśrī cult to the activities of the movement, and from this time on, Eison's Saidaiji 西大寺 order combined its characteristic emphasis on the precepts with social welfare activities.

Ninshō and Eison are both regarded as emulating the Nara-period (710–794) saint Gyōki 行基 (668–749) in their social welfare activities, and Gyōki is widely considered the prototypical *hijiri* 聖. But in one of the most provocative studies of Ninshō, Oishio Chihiro has argued that a major difference between the two Shingon Ritsu leaders is that Ninshō showed more affinities with *hijiri* than the scholar-monk Eison did. Furthermore, any exploration of Ninshō's and Eison's emulation of Gyōki needs to address the Mañjuśrī cult with which Gyōki's legacy was so closely tied. By the Kamakura period, Gyōki had long been hailed as an incarnation of Mañjuśrī,[2] and the Saidaiji order's social welfare activities, particularly those involving *hinin*, were tied to the Mañjuśrī cult from the start. Although Shingon Ritsu activities involving the Mañjuśrī and Gyōki cults were closely linked, there are significant differences between Ninshō and Eison regarding the social welfare activities attributed to Gyōki and to "*hijiri*" more generally.[3] To state my conclusions in advance, I believe

[2] The identification of Gyōki with Mañjuśrī can be traced in Buddhist tale collections as far back as the *Nihon ryōiki* 日本霊異記, composed near the turn of the ninth century (Nakamura 1997, p. 115). Paul Groner has provided a helpful list of references to this identification in a variety of Heian- and Kamakura-period collections, including both Japanese and, where available, English renditions (Groner 2001, p. 236, n. 66).

[3] I have problematized the concept of *hijiri* here due to provocative issues raised by Christoph Kleine in his 1997 reevaluation of the term. As Kleine argues, extramonastic renunciants were referred to by various terms in ancient and early medieval primary sources. The tendency to lump them together as *hijiri* is therefore more a construction of modern scholars. According to Kleine's analysis, the same holds true for the term *kanjin hijiri* 勧進聖 . I find Kleine's arguments compelling; however, for this study I would like to simply concede that I am using *hijiri* and *kanjin hijiri* as "buddhological terms (used and defined on a scholarly basis)" rather than necessarily "Buddhist terms" as they were used and defined by the Buddhists of the time periods in question (Kleine 1997, p. 7). Thus here, I intend to reflect the usage of the term *hijiri* by most modern scholars, referring to itinerant renunciants largely operating beyond (but often in cooperation with) formal temple hierarchies and emphasizing ascetic and magical practices. For two of the best-known English-language studies of *hijiri* in ancient and medieval Japan, see Hori 1958 and Goodwin 1994.

there is indeed strong support for viewing Ninshō as emulating a *kanjin hijiri* paradigm of Gyōki that emerges in the late Heian and early Kamakura period.[4] This is due to both the pattern of practice suggested in Ninshō's formative years and the breadth of his later involvement in social welfare activities, which came to include many public works projects. Eison's involvement in social welfare activities, however, was more circumscribed, largely rejecting public works projects and focusing on Mañjuśrī offering ceremonies and *hinin*. In addition, despite considerable evidence for Shingon Ritsu participation in both the Mañjuśrī and the Gyōki cults, and the long-standing associations between the two cults, there is a curious scarcity of direct reference to Gyōki in Eison's own writings. I thus argue that the ways in which Eison and Ninshō can be said to emulate Gyōki, particularly regarding their *kanjin hijiri* characteristics, should be carefully distinguished. Moreover, to understand Eison's involvement in the Gyōki cult, we need to explore his narrative and ritual strategies as well as the contexts within which he does and does not refer to Gyōki.

To address these interrelated issues, I will first briefly summarize Eison's career before the initial meeting with Ninshō described in his autobiography, then examine the passages introducing Ninshō. Next, I explore portrayals of Ninshō's background before the encounter with Eison for insight into how Ninshō may have developed the model of renunciant practices and Mañjuśrī faith suggested in this exchange. I then highlight the differences and mutual influences between Ninshō and Eison concerning the Mañjuśrī cult and scholarly activities. In the following section, I investigate the differences between Ninshō and Eison regarding public works projects and *kanjin hijiri* paradigms of Gyōki. I conclude by analyzing the rhetorical and ritual manner in which Eison modeled himself as a "living bodhisattva" intimately connected to Mañjuśrī, much as Gyōki was believed to have been, while remaining surprisingly silent on the saint in his written works.

THE EARLY CAREERS OF EISON AND NINSHŌ

Eison's Career Before Meeting Ninshō

When Eison met Ninshō in 1239, he was at the beginning of his efforts to

[4] *Kanjin hijiri* generally refers to itinerant monks actively engaged in temple fund-raising campaigns (*kanjin*) for construction projects, including such public works activities as building roads, bridges, hospices, and ports. See Goodwin 1994 for a groundbreaking study of these campaigns in the Kamakura period.

restore the Nara temple Saidaiji and establish an order of Ritsu monks there.[5] The son of a Kōfukuji 興福寺 scholar-monk, Eison began his monastic career performing miscellaneous tasks for a Shingon master at Daigoji 醍醐寺 at age eleven. After formally taking the tonsure when he was seventeen, Eison went on to study Shingon esoteric Buddhism at Daigoji as well as Mt. Kōya 高野 and Tōdaiji 東大寺. By the time he was twenty-five he had progressed so far in his training as to receive the exalted *gushi kanjō* 具支灌頂 esoteric initiation and the seal of dharma transmission (*injin* 印信) from the master Jōkei 静慶 (1150–1243) at Chōgakuji Ryōzen'in 長岳寺霊山院.[6] However, as Eison tells the tale, in 1234, although ten years had elapsed since he received the dharma transmission and he had remained diligent in his training, he was nagged by the following doubt about the esoteric teachings: "Despite the unbroken lineage of transmission, many practitioners have fallen into the evil realm (*madō* 魔道), just like Śāriputra. Has Māra disguised himself as the Buddha in order to derange our minds?"[7] Based on his examination of various scriptures, he concluded that such practitioners were falling into Māra's evil realm because they did not keep the precepts.[8] For Eison, this meant that to be an orthodox monk or nun, one needed to keep the full exoteric monastic precepts as well as the esoteric *samaya* precepts. This is not to say that he renounced esoteric Buddhism—far from it. Rather, it was precisely *through* keeping the precepts, and

[5] My summary of Eison's early career is based on the *Gakushōki* entries for the relevant dates, unless otherwise noted. For the text of the *Gakushōki*, I have used the unannotated classical Chinese version in *Saidaiji Eison denki shūsei* 西大寺叡尊伝記集成 (hereafter abbreviated as SEDS). I have also benefited from the annotated rendering in Hosokawa 1999 (which covers two parts of the full three-part autobiography). Except for transliterations, terms in parentheses in passages I have translated represent interlinear insertions rendered in small type in the original texts; terms in brackets are my editorial insertions. When referring to specific dated entries from the *Gakushōki* and other records, I use the format year/lunar month/day (to the degree indicated).

[6] The *Gakushōki* entry for 1225/9/26 (SEDS, p. 5). Chōgakuji was a branch temple of Kōfukuji's Daijōin 大乗院 in the Kamakura period.

[7] The *Gakushōki* entry for 1234 (SEDS, pp. 6–7). Śāriputra was one of the Buddha's ten great disciples, but was said in the *Ta chih-tu lun* 大智度論 (T no. 1509) to have abandoned the Mahayana path and fallen into the evil realm, after a one-eyed beggar who asked for his eye abused and rejected it (Hosokawa 1999, pp. 50–51, n. 7).

[8] Eison cites fascicle 2 of the *Ta-jih ching* 大日経 (T no. 848), fascicle 9 of the commentary on the *Ta-jih ching* (*Ta-jih ching shu* 大日経疏, T no. 1796) explicated by Śubhākarasiṃha (637–735) and recorded by I-hsing 一行 (683–727), and two *yuikai* 遺誡 (admonitions to disciples) attributed to Kūkai 空海 (774–835), on 813/5/30 and 834/5/28 (SEDS, pp. 7–8).

thereby avoiding evil deeds, that one could penetrate the depths of the esoteric teachings.[9] Eison thus vowed to advance toward enlightenment, study Ritsu, and benefit multitudinous sentient beings.

Eison's career as a Ritsu monk was dramatically launched with his participation in a groundbreaking "self-ordination" ceremony (*jisei jukai* 自誓受戒) at Tōdaiji in 1236, along with Kakujō 覚盛 (1194–1249), Ensei 円晴 (1180–1241), and Ugon 有厳 (1186–1275). In the perceived absence of qualified monks who had properly kept the precepts and could thereby legitimately confer ordination, this ceremony was undertaken to establish a new ordination lineage. The ceremony entailed an elaborate series of repentance rites, ordination before an image of a Buddha or bodhisattva, and the reception of auspicious signs while dreaming or awake. These signs were considered necessary to confirm the purification of one's transgressions and attainment of the precepts, and the precepts were believed to have been conferred directly by a Buddha or bodhisattva.[10]

Doctrinally, the new lineage was grounded in an innovative interpretation of the comprehensive self-ordination ceremony (*jisei tsūju* 自誓通受) as one enabling the participants to simultaneously attain the status of a bodhisattva and a *bhikṣu* (Jpn. *biku* 比丘), or full monkhood. Thus from this time, Eison, Kakujō, and their fellow monks understood themselves specifically as "bodhisattva *bhikṣu*," a twofold status that, outside Tendai, had been previously believed to be attained only through a two-step process. In short, monks affiliated with the Nara schools and Shingon traditionally took the full monastic precepts (*gusoku kai* 具足戒) based on the *Ssu-fen lü* 四分律 (T no. 1428; hereafter *Vinaya in Four Parts*) and attained *bhikṣu* status through a "separate ordina-

[9] For this relationship between the precepts and esoteric Buddhism in Eison's thought, see the full *Gakushōki* entry for 1234 (SEDS, pp. 6–8) and Oishio 1995, pp. 180–203. Note, however, that Matsuo Kenji sees the relationship between Ritsu and Shingon in Eison's activities somewhat differently (Matsuo 1996, pp. 134–35).

[10] Eison addresses the self-ordination ceremony and the events leading to his participation in the *Gakushōki* entries for 1235 and 1236 (SEDS, pp. 8–10). He also details his participation in his *Jisei jukaiki* 自誓受戒記 of 1236/9, which was inserted and preserved in a statue made of him in 1280; see SEDS, pp. 337–38. Note that this text includes Eison's earliest dated reference to Mañjuśrī, as part of a quote from the *Ta fang-teng t'o-lo-ni ching* 大方等陀羅尼経 (T no. 1339). The quote concerns the auspicious signs confirming that one's transgressions have been erased and the pure precepts have been attained. Here, however, Mañjuśrī merely appears in his familiar role as the Buddha's interlocutor, thus the reference does not demonstrate a distinctive Mañjuśrī faith or participation in the Mañjuśrī cult by Eison at this stage. For Eison's quote, see SEDS, pp. 337–38; for the passage in the original sutra, see T 21: 656b28–c3.

tion" (*betsuju* 別受) at an official Nara-lineage ordination platform. However, in Nara since the time of Chien-chen 鑑真 (688–763), bodhisattva status was believed to be attained only through a "comprehensive ordination" ceremony (*tsūju* 通受). Although this ceremony included the full monastic precepts, it was not considered to confer *bhikṣu* status and thus soon fell into disuse. Tendai, on the other hand, followed a different ordination system altogether, in which monks were ordained solely through the *Fan-wang ching* 梵網経 (T no. 1484) bodhisattva precepts on dedicated Tendai platforms. The Tendai single-stage ordination also differed from that advocated by Kakujō and Eison in that it was not conducted through self-ordination.[11] Thus, when Eison was finally able to move permanently into Saidaiji in the eighth month of 1238 and make it the base for his efforts to develop a new order of Ritsu monks and nuns,[12] he did so fortified with both the orthodox qualifications of a Shingon master and an innovative interpretation of monastic ordinations. Shortly after Eison begins his efforts to develop this new order, in the ninth month of 1239, he encounters Ninshō for the first time. My summary of the passages in Eison's autobiography introducing Ninshō follows.

The Gakushōki *Entries Introducing Ninshō*

Eison's moving account of his first meeting with Ninshō is probably the most widely cited passage in Eison's writings concerning his renowned disciple.[13] Eison begins the passage by indicating that he conferred the ten major pre-

[11] Among secondary sources, for more details on the rites, their doctrinal foundations, and their significance, see Matsuo 1995, pp. 220–22; Matsuo 1996, pp. 43–46; Minowa 1999, particularly chapters 4 and 7; Groner 2001, pp. 114–17; and Groner 2005, pp. 212–15. On the establishment of the Tendai system of bodhisattva precepts, see Groner 1984, pp. 107–246.

[12] Eison originally moved into Saidaiji in the first month of 1235, shortly after his vow to study the precepts. However, after the self-ordination rites concluded and he returned to Saidaiji at the end of the ninth month of 1236, he was forced to leave due to difficulties caused by the warrior government-appointed estate steward (*jitō* 地頭). Eison eventually took up residence at Kairyūōji 海龍王寺, but there too ran into difficulties, this time due to tensions with fellow monks over his strict interpretations of the precepts. After tensions there reached a boiling point, Eison was urged to return to Saidaiji, and he finally was able to move in permanently in the eighth month of 1238. See the *Gakushōki* passages for 1236, under the heading "Move to Kairyūōji," and for 1238 (SEDS, pp. 11–13). On Eison's differences with the Kairyūōji monks, see Groner 2005, p. 215.

[13] The following summary is based on the *Gakushōki* passages for 1239/9 and 1240/1 through 1240/4 in SEDS, pp. 14–15.

cepts on Ninshō on 1239/9/8 and recommended that he "leave the household" (*shukke* 出家).[14] Upon hearing this, Ninshō burst into tears and replied:

> Because I am my parents' only son, together they cherished me like nothing else. In particular, my mother's sorrows were extraordinary. Beset by illness and her time drawing near, she longed to see me in the guise of a monk (Jpn. *shamon* 沙門; Skt. *śramaṇa*). Thus I quickly took the tonsure and put on the dharma-robes. However, she grew increasingly despondent about the future. Summer or winter, she asked for nothing; nor did she hate this defiled world and long for the Pure Land. Grieving only over Ninshō's hardships in the future, she breathed her last and her spirit left.[15]

It is in connection with the rites Ninshō wishes to perform for his mother that Mañjuśrī faith is first indicated in Eison's autobiography. Immediately following Ninshō's account of his mother's concern for him, he tells Eison:

> I was sixteen then, and I had no power with which to repay her kindness and express my gratitude for her virtue. I lacked the techniques to dispel suffering and provide comfort. I could only turn to the majestic power of the main deity Mañjuśrī. Thus for the thirteenth anniversary of my mother's death, I will compose seven pictures of Mañjuśrī and enshrine them at seven [*hinin*] communities in this province, and on the twenty-fifth day of each month have his jewel-name chanted incessantly from morning until night. I shall send the generated merit to the place where my departed mother has been reborn and effect the supreme cause for her liberation.[16]

Ninshō then reveals the basis for his reservations regarding Eison's recommendation to "leave the household," indicating that fulfilling this long-held

[14] The ten major precepts (*jūjū* here, short for *jūjū kinkai* 十重禁戒) in Eison's order were based on the *Fan-wang ching*: not to kill; not to steal; not to engage in sexual misconduct; not to lie; not to sell alcohol; not to speak of the transgressions of bodhisattvas, monks, or nuns; not to praise oneself and criticize others; not to begrudge property or the teachings to others; not to vent anger; and not to slander the Three Jewels (Buddha, dharma, and *saṃgha*).

[15] SEDS, p. 14.

[16] SEDS, pp. 14–15.

vow was his sole wish and that only after fulfilling this vow should he "leave the household and study the Way." Eison, in turn, responds by repeating his recommendation and urging that Ninshō not wait until his mother's thirteenth-year memorial rite:

> Since the merit of leaving the household is vast and limitless, nothing surpasses leaving the household. Receive and keep the Buddha's precepts, then send that generated merit to the place where she has been reborn and effect the cause for dispelling suffering and providing comfort. Material resources are unreliable and human lives, plundered by the five lords, are impermanent.[17] Thus why should you wait until the thirteenth-year [memorial] instead?[18]

However, even this argument fails to immediately persuade Ninshō, as he initially withdraws without assenting to Eison's recommendation. It is not until the first month of the following year (1240) that Ninshō returns and informs Eison of his decision to leave the household:

> What I told you last fall was a vow I made in childhood. This spring, I will compose one picture of Mañjuśrī's revered image and enshrine it at the [*hinin*] community on the west side of Gakuanji 額安寺. I will have the members of this community receive and keep the pure precepts for one day and night and have the procedures for the eye-opening ceremony carried out.[19] In this way, I plan to fulfill my original vow to repay my mother's kindness and express my gratitude for her virtue. After that, I will leave the household.[20]

[17] The "five lords" (*goshu* 五主) refer to the five internal organs (Hosokawa 1999, p. 110, n. 25).

[18] SEDS, p. 15.

[19] The "pure precepts" (*saikai* 斎戒) in this passage refer to the eight pure precepts for lay people. These were traditionally observed only on specific days and included refraining from (1) killing; (2) stealing; (3) sexual intercourse; (4) lying; (5) drinking alcohol; (6) adorning one's body or indulging in dancing or music; (7) sleeping in a fine raised bed; and (8) eating after noon. Alternatively, the sixth precept could be divided into two, for a total of nine precepts. In Eison's order, however, the eight precepts varied slightly for distinct groups of lay and quasi-lay followers and were kept for different lengths of time. See Minowa 1999, chapter 8 and pp. 435–64, and, in English, Groner 2005, pp. 230–2.

[20] SEDS, p. 15.

Ninshō then asks Eison if he would come to the Gakuanji *hinin* community to confer the eight pure precepts (*hassaikai* 八斎戒) for lay followers, noting that "ordinary assembly leaders have great obstacles" to performing the rites.[21] Eison agrees and on the sixth day of the third month in 1240 he carries out the rites, conferring the eight pure precepts on four hundred "people and *hinin*" and the bodhisattva precepts on thirty "people."[22] Eison closes his account of Ninshō's *shukke* by noting that at the end of the same month, Ninshō does indeed leave the household, before receiving the ten precepts from Eison on the third day of the fourth month and the full precepts on the eleventh day of that month.

Ninshō's Career Before Meeting Eison

The preceding account is revealing concerning Ninshō's Mañjuśrī faith and monastic orientation before his entry into Eison's order. It also demonstrates a certain "give-and-take" in their relationship that is easily belied by Eison's seniority and status as Ninshō's teacher. As Eison's own words make clear, Ninshō at first simply listened and withdrew, not yet convinced. It is four months before he returns and seven months before he completes the full ordination and enters Saidaiji. Although he does eventually relent on his intention to wait until the thirteenth anniversary of his mother's death, he holds his ground on at least starting his intended project before accepting formal ordination under Eison. Ninshō's hesitance is all the more noteworthy when we consider the following. First, although just starting his restoration of Saidaiji and establishment of a Ritsu order there, Eison was surely known to Ninshō as a Ritsu monk by this time and that was part of what led Ninshō to him. Second, it was evidently Ninshō's mother's dying wish that he would become an ordained monk, just as Eison was recommending. Third, according to the first detailed biographical source on Ninshō, the *Shōkō daitokufu* 性公大徳譜 (hereafter *Daitokufu*), he had been associated with monastic institutions to varying degrees for twelve years by the time he met Eison. Whatever else Ninshō was

[21] Alternatively, this phrase might be translated as referring to Ninshō specifically: "As an ordinary ceremony leader, [I] have great obstacles to performing the rite." In either case, the "obstacles" mentioned here likely refer to the conferral of precepts as part of the ceremony.

[22] There is considerable variation in the interpretations of previous scholars concerning who gave which precepts to whom in this passage. I believe, however, that this is the most plausible interpretation; see the annotations to my translation of the text in Quinter 2006, p. 318, for my full analysis.

at this time, he was hardly a typical householder or "lay" Buddhist.

Thus before returning to Ninshō's entrance into Saidaiji and exploring his and Eison's varying patterns of Gyōki faith, to help gain insight into Ninshō's early itinerant and cultic practices, I would like to examine the account of his early career in the *Daitokufu* as well as the temples he frequented. The *Daitokufu* was compiled by Ninshō's disciple Chōmyō 澄名 in 1310, seven years after his death. Although we must allow room for hagiographic interpolation in the *Daitokufu*, in general the *Daitokufu* corresponds well with the *Gakushōki* and other records from the time and is considered reliable.[23]

The *Daitokufu* records that Ninshō journeyed to Mt. Shigi 信貴 as early as age eleven, where he learned the five-syllable Mañjuśrī spell.[24] At thirteen he vowed not to eat meat, following the example of Maitreya.[25] Turning fourteen, he printed images of Mañjuśrī and began to keep the precepts. After his mother died when he was sixteen, he resided at Gakuanji for eighty days, took the tonsure, and left the household. He began to make pilgrimages every month to Abedera 安部寺[26] (which housed a renowned Mañjuśrī image completed in 1203). He continued this practice for four years, praying for the awakening of the bodhi-mind. At age seventeen he "ascended the platform and received the precepts" at Tōdaiji. When he was eighteen, he learned to recite the *Lotus Sutra*. Then for six years starting from age nineteen, he journeyed every month to Mt. Ikoma 生駒 (home to Chikurinji 竹林寺 and a famed locus for Gyōki's ascetic practices). There, his Mañjuśrī contemplations and ascetic practices deepened. The biography reports that at age twenty, he fasted for seven days

[23] On the reliability of the *Daitokufu* and its use as a standard for other Ninshō biographies, see Wajima 1959, p. 101, and Yoshida 1983, pp. 393–94. The following summary of these years in the biography is based on the collated edition in Tanaka 1973. The original can also be found in Tsuji 1976, pp. 281–84, although Tanaka's edition is more helpful.

[24] "Spell" is used in this study to translate *myō* 明 or *ju* 呪 (also 咒), referring to esoteric phrases such as *vidyā*, mantras, or *dhāraṇī* (Jpn. *darani* 陀羅尼). These phrases are believed to capture the essence of a particular deity, sutra, or teaching and are used to invoke the deities or scriptures and to bring about specific benefits.

[25] For the connection between Maitreya and the vow to abstain from eating meat, see the *Ta-ch'eng pen-sheng hsin-ti kuan ching* 大乗本生心地観経 (T no. 159; see T 3: 305c29–306a1). Notably, this verse occurs right after a famous verse on Mañjuśrī as the mother of the Buddhas of the three times, and it explains the basis for the epithet "Compassionate Master" also used in the *Daitokufu* passage to refer to Maitreya.

[26] Abedera is also known as Sūkeiji 崇敬寺 and is commonly referred to today as the Abe no Monjuin 安倍の文殊院 .

three times and recited the five-syllable Mañjuśrī spell five hundred thousand times. At twenty-three, he vowed to abstain from sex and alcohol forever. Going into seclusion at Mt. Ikoma for fourteen days, he prayed for the bodhi-mind and contemplated Mañjuśrī. The biography then brings us to the time of the *Gakushōki* passages introducing Ninshō, with his receiving the first set of ten precepts from Eison that same year.[27]

This portrait is largely consistent with Eison's *Gakushōki* account regarding Ninshō's early emphasis on Mañjuśrī faith and links between his mother's death, Mañjuśrī practices, and Gakuanji. At the same time, though, the juxtaposition of the two accounts raises significant questions. If, as the *Daitokufu* indicates, Ninshō had already "taken the tonsure and left the household" at Gakuanji when he was sixteen, and further "ascended the platform and received the precepts" at Tōdaiji when he was seventeen, why was Eison still recommending that Ninshō "leave the household" when Ninshō was twenty-three? What exactly was the nature of the *shukke* Eison was recommending, and why should Ninshō have been so hesitant to undertake it if he had, in fact, already been a monk for seven years?

Answering these questions necessitates first looking closer at the nature of Ninshō's ordinations. Before his encounter with Eison, Ninshō appears to have followed the traditional two-stage ordination process for Nara monks at the time, of *shukke* and *jukai*. *Shukke* in this process referred to the reception of

[27] In contrast to the *Gakushōki*, the *Daitokufu* records the date of these first ten precepts as 1239/4/20 rather than 1239/9/8. However, the *Daitokufu* is consistent with the *Gakushōki* regarding the dates of the ten and full precepts under Eison the following year.

The only earlier biography—the *Ryōkan shōnin sharibyōki* 良観上人舎利瓶記 (hereafter *Sharibyōki*), written immediately after Ninshō's death in 1303—is a very brief account inscribed on his reliquary and thus naturally does not go into the detail the *Daitokufu* does. But the *Sharibyōki* does confirm the *shukke* at sixteen, "ascending the platform" and "receiving the precepts" at Tōdaiji at seventeen, and the reception of the full precepts under Eison at twenty-four. Although not detailing Ninshō's specific activities at other temples, this biography does suggest Ninshō's intimate connections with Gakuanji and Chikurinji on Mt. Ikoma by indicating that his relics were divided among those two temples and Gokurakuji 極楽寺 (where he spent the majority of his career and served as the first elder). Also, Ninshō was born near Gakuanji, and this was the first temple to which he donated a Mañjuśrī image. Thus the possibility that this was in fact the temple he first went to when his mother died is strong.

For an annotated rendering of the *Sharibyōki*, based on the inscription for Ninshō's reliquary enshrined at Chikurinji and excavated in 1986, see Inoue 1997, pp. 356–59. An unannotated classical Chinese version, based on a 1579 transcription from the Gokurakuji reliquary, can be found in Kamakura-shi Shi Hensan Iinkai 1956-58, vol. 3, pp. 400–401.

the ten precepts to become a novice monk (Jpn. *shami* 沙弥; Skt. *śrāmaṇera*), while *jukai* usually referred to the ritual for administering the precepts necessary for a novice monk to become fully ordained. The precepts in question varied among different Buddhist groups, but for monks ordained at Tōdaiji—as both the *Daitokufu* and the 1303 *Sharibyōki* biographies indicate Ninshō was—this meant receiving the full 250 precepts of the *Vinaya in Four Parts*.[28] But although Ninshō had already been officially ordained in two stages, Eison likely rejected the legitimacy of these ordinations, much as he had come to reject his own initial ordination, and believed that Ninshō likewise should be re-ordained in the lineage established through the self-ordination ritual at Tōdaiji in 1236. As Matsuo Kenji has shown, Eison and his colleagues date their monastic ages to their ordination in the new Ritsu lineage, regardless of any prior ordination status.[29] After such entrance into a Ritsu order, Eison and his fellow monks are repeatedly identified by themselves and others as *tonsei* 遁世, referring to the act or status of reclusion.[30] And this, for Eison, represented the true *shukke*.

That said, we are still left with the question of Ninshō's hesitation to accept this ordination under Eison. Here, the contrast Oishio draws between the *hijiri*-like nature of Ninshō's early career and Eison's more scholarly nature is informative. Even if Ninshō had been officially ordained (with Gakuanji as his resident temple) before entering Saidaiji, four years of monthly pilgrimages to Abedera, six years of monthly pilgrimages to Chikurinji, and the various ascetic practices in the portrait of his early career certainly suggest a continued pattern of itinerancy and asceticism often attributed to *hijiri*. Thus Oishio's analysis of the temples Ninshō was said to have frequented before his meeting

[28] See Matsuo 2004, pp. 190–91, on this two-stage ordination process.

[29] Matsuo 1998c, p. 198.

[30] For just two examples of the self-designation as *tonsei*, see Chōmyō's reference in the *Daitokufu* to Ninshō's re-ordination under Eison as an act of *tonsei* (Tanaka 1973, p. 45) and the Kōyasan manuscript of the *Monju kōshiki* 文殊講式 attributed to Eison: "even those with slight faith in the law of cause and effect should repay that debt—how much more so for those who retreat from the world [*tonsei*] and seclude themselves?" (from the *Monju kōshiki* copy dated Tenmon 天文 19 [1550] in Kōyasan Daigaku Toshokan 2001; see Quinter 2006, pp. 319–39, for more details on this text and an annotated translation). See also Kakujō's *Bosatsukai tsūju kengishō* 菩薩戒通受遣疑鈔 , where he cites the following criticism of his and his colleagues' doctrine regarding the precepts: "Recently, *tonsei* comrades receive the threefold pure precepts and call themselves a *bhikṣu* group, keep the five categories of strict precepts and make that a bodhisattva dharma; it seems to be a new teaching—what basis do you have?" (translation based on Minowa 1999, p. 679; see also Matsuo 1995, p. 221).

with Eison, and the practices associated with them, merit attention here.

Oishio indicates that Mt. Shigi, situated in the southern Ikoma mountain region in Nara, was a locale for itinerant practitioners such as *hijiri* and *shugenja* 修験者 who specialized in *kaji kitō* 加持祈禱, or esoteric prayer-rituals for specific benefits including health, longevity, safe childbirth, and the prevention of natural disasters. Oishio also finds evidence for the Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–621) cult at Mt. Shigi. The same holds true for the next temple Ninshō was associated with, Gakuanji, which was reputedly built on the site of Kumagori shōja 熊凝精舎 founded by Prince Shōtoku.[31] Shōtoku Taishi, much like Gyōki, was known for widely combining social welfare practices with Buddhist teachings, and thus devotion to these two early Japanese Buddhist saints was often linked.

The cultic center for Ninshō's third place of practice according to the *Daitokufu*, Abedera in the Sakurai area of Nara, was Mañjuśrī and therefore was also implicitly linked to the Gyōki cult. The magnificent Mañjuśrī image still housed at Abedera was made by the renowned Buddhist sculptor Kaikei 快慶 (n.d.). In 1203 a group of about fifty donors, including the sculptor himself and the Tōdaiji monk Chōgen 重源 (1121–1206), established karmic bonds (*kechien* 結縁) among themselves and the deity by inserting their names in the image. In 1220, Myōhen 明遍 (1142–1224), a Shingon monk affiliated with both Tōdaiji and Mt. Kōya, added his name to this group by dedicating and inserting a text with the *Butchō sonshō darani* 仏頂尊勝陀羅尼 and the one, five, and eight syllable Mañjuśrī mantras.[32] This pattern of image creation and establishment of karmic bonds among donors, artists, and monks by inserting rosters, mantras, and scriptures into images was to become a prominent feature of Shingon Ritsu temple restoration efforts.[33] The connections with Chōgen, one of the most famous *hijiri* in Japanese history, as well as with Myōhen, who

[31] Oishio 1995, pp. 291–93.

[32] I have supplemented my summary of Oishio's analysis here with reference to Kanda 1979. Significantly, the Mañjuśrī pentad configuration used at Abedera was also the iconographic style for the two most renowned Mañjuśrī statues commissioned by the Saidaiji order, the now-lost Hannyaji 般若寺 Mañjuśrī statue dedicated in 1269 (with two attendant figures completed in 1287 and the remaining two sometime thereafter) and the extant Saidaiji Mañjuśrī pentad, dedicated in 1302 for the thirteenth anniversary of Eison's death. This style of Mañjuśrī image is generally referred to as Godaisan Monju 五台山文殊 (Mt. Wu-t'ai Mañjuśrī) or Tokai Monju 渡海文殊 (Sea-Crossing Mañjuśrī), as Mañjuśrī and his four attendants were said to have crossed the sea to Japan from Mt. Wu-t'ai.

[33] See McCallum 1996, Brinker 1997–98, Groner 2001, and Wu 2002 for revealing English-language studies of the school's icon-constructing practices.

would become affiliated with the Kōya *hijiri*, are also noteworthy here.

The timing of Ninshō's next migration, to Chikurinji on Mt. Ikoma at age nineteen, is conspicuous. According to the *Ikomayama Chikurinji engi* 生駒山竹林寺縁起 written by Jakumetsu 寂滅 (n.d.) in the ninth month of 1235—the year Ninshō began journeying to Chikurinji—a series of oracles by Gyōki and Gyōki's mother to the monk Keion 慶恩 (or Kyōon; n.d.) in 1234 and 1235 ultimately led to the miraculous discovery of Gyōki's reliquary in the eighth month of 1235. The account highlights the simultaneously public and fabulous nature of this episode, which may have drawn Ninshō here and surely nurtured his faith in Gyōki.[34]

The *engi* relates that Keion originally discovered two relics in a stone pagoda atop Gyōki's gravesite on 1234/6/26 in response to the first oracle, on 6/24. The oracle also told Keion where to find a record of Gyōki's deeds. However, the assemblage of monks and lay people to whom Keion reported this did not believe him, because the stone pagoda had only been put there in recent years. Nevertheless, an oracle by Gyōki's mother followed, directing Keion even more specifically to the record and indicating that he and a group of monks would discover Gyōki's remains. On 12/25 of that year, white smoke filled Keion's hermitage, and the local people gathered, fearing a fire. But they found none, and the smoke then rose and covered Gyōki's mausoleum. Finally on 8/11 the following year, Keion was specifically directed by Gyōki to excavate his mausoleum on 8/25 and dispel the doubts. Although more debate and hesitation among monks and the local people followed, ultimately, the "monks and lay with a single mind" decided to conduct the excavation together on the specified day. When they did, they discovered an octagonal stone container with a silver urn inside. The urn was inscribed with the words "Reliquary containing the remains of Gyōki Bosatsu . . ." and Gyōki's epitaph.[35]

[34] For my account of the *Ikomayama Chikurinji engi* episode that follows, I have supplemented Oishio's brief references by consulting the annotated version in Inoue 1997, pp. 350–56. See also the summaries and analyses in Hosokawa 1987, pp. 43–46, and Augustine 2005, pp. 115–16.

[35] In his recent study of Gyōki, Jonathan Augustine writes that although scholars had believed this to be a fabricated account, in 1915 an inscribed triangular stone was discovered in the Ikoma area, and the inscription matched the text of the oldest copy of the *Daisōjō sharibyōki* 大僧正舎利瓶記 , Gyōki's "Reliquary Biography." He further points out that the glaze on the inscription was consistent with that used for funeral urns in the eighth century, when Gyōki died (Augustine 2005, p. 115).

Given the timing of Ninshō's arrival and the fact that he was already steeped in the cult of Mañjuśrī, Oishio believes there is a strong possibility that Ninshō was among the "monks and lay" who opened the mausoleum.[36] Also, as Hosokawa's examination of this episode indicates, the excavation was led by Ritsu monks who used the episode as a springboard for a campaign to establish Chikurinji there as a Ritsu temple. This episode may thus have helped Ninshō develop the ability he would later show in mobilizing the support of lay people behind his own projects, by demonstrating the promotional effectiveness of the Gyōki cult in *kanjin* campaigns.[37]

Oishio concludes from his analysis of the temples mentioned in the *Daitokufu* that after first leaving the household, rather than becoming a scholar-monk, Ninshō followed in the footsteps of the extramonastic *shugenja* and *hijiri* he had had contact with from childhood. Also, in addition to the Mañjuśrī and Gyōki cults in which he was fostered at these temples, he may have developed faith in Shōtoku Taishi in an organic link with the Mañjuśrī and Gyōki cults that developed in the Heian and Kamakura periods.[38] Oishio suggests that during Ninshō's time at these temples, Mañjuśrī, Gyōki, and Shōtoku Taishi may all have been linked in a single cultic environment between Mt. Ikoma and nearby Mt. Shigi. Furthermore, as Mt. Shigi and Abedera became connected in a later Shugendō circuit, Oishio raises the possibility that Ninshō's movement from Mt. Shigi to Gakuanji, Abedera, and Mt. Ikoma was part of a specific pilgrimage or ascetic course.[39]

As Oishio himself admits, this analysis requires much reading between the lines of the sources and is difficult to state conclusively. Also, as the pairing with *shugenja* suggests, the term *hijiri* in his analysis is used rather broadly

[36] Oishio 1995, p. 295. Connections between Ninshō and the 1235 excavation of Gyōki's mausoleum are also suggested in the *Gyōki jiten*, which includes the text of the *Sharibyōki* for Ninshō appended to the *Ikomayama Chikurinji engi*. The editors indicate that a multistoried pagoda at Chikurinji long said to mark Ninshō's gravesite (but lacking any identifying inscription) was excavated in 1986. The excavation confirmed that this was indeed one of Ninshō's gravesites, as a reliquary was found with the *Sharibyōki* inscribed on it. In addition, the editors note that the structure of the grave was very similar to the one for Gyōki discovered in the 1235 episode, and they cite this as a further indication that Ninshō may have actually witnessed the excavation of Gyōki's mausoleum (Inoue 1997, p. 357, n. 1; see also p. 358, n. 9).

[37] Hosokawa 1987, pp. 43–47.

[38] For a fuller analysis of this link, including in Eison's cultic activities, see Oishio 1995, pp. 190–91, 230–33, and 238–40.

[39] Oishio 1995, pp. 295–96.

for a class of itinerant, extramonastic renunciants concentrating on ascetic and magical practices in various sacred locales. Yet whatever terms we use to designate such practitioners, Oishio's emphasis on Ninshō's itinerant background and cultic practices before entering Saidaiji is apt, in light of the *Daitokufu* account. Thus I would now like to return to the question of Ninshō's entrance into Saidaiji and the give-and-take between him and Eison, who clearly was a scholar-monk (his status as a "reclusive monk" notwithstanding).

Mutual Influences between Eison and Ninshō: Scholarly Training and Mañjuśrī Assemblies

Given the nature of Ninshō's formative career, I suggest that we take seriously his stated hesitance to "*study* the Way" (*gakudō* 学道, emphasis mine) in his initial reply to Eison on entering Saidaiji. Based on Eison's account, Ninshō's main goal at the time was to accrue the merit to liberate his mother through charitable deeds and devotion to Mañjuśrī. Although scholarship is, of course, not all Ninshō would be expected to undertake at Saidaiji, it may be emblematic of the ties that he feared could interfere with that goal. Three different passages in Eison's writings make clear Ninshō's struggle with scholarship after entering the temple. In this regard, Ninshō stands in sharp contrast to his teacher. Significantly, two of these passages are tied directly to Ninshō's desire to journey away from Saidaiji because he did not believe that scholarship was how he could best benefit sentient beings. The portrait of Ninshō's early years at Saidaiji thus tallies with the *Daitokufu* image of his early career as one characterized by itinerancy and asceticism more than scholarship.

Although Ninshō ultimately left Saidaiji (though not Eison's order itself) in 1252,[40] he initially set out for Kantō in 1243 only to return in the seventh month of that year, according to the *Daitokufu*.[41] The *Kōshō Bosatsu gokyōkai chōmonshū* 興正菩薩御教誡聴聞集 (hereafter *Chōmonshū*)—a record of sermons attributed to Eison and apparently delivered when he was in his eighties—shows Eison recollecting Ninshō's account of his intentions before heading to Kantō for the first time: "Thinking, 'I am not fit for scholarship and therefore have no ability, but somehow or other must save sentient beings,' Ryōkanbō 良観房 [Ninshō] went to Kantō." However, during this journey, Ninshō twice

[40] On Ninshō's move to Kantō in 1252, see the *Daitokufu* (Tanaka 1973, p. 46) as well as the *Gakushōki* entry for 1252/7/25 (SEDS, pp. 24–25).

[41] Tanaka 1973, p. 45.

encountered monks who asked him basic questions pertaining to Ritsu terminology. As a result, Eison elaborates, Ninshō realized that

> "Being ignorant, I had believed myself unfit to establish this dharma. But in this latter age, even such knowledge as this is rare. And again, although I may be ignorant, while studying, etc., at Saidaiji, I became accustomed to hearing such things and at least came to know this much." Thus realizing the benefits of scholarly training, [Ninshō] returned to Nanto 南都 and studied for ten years. After generally learning such matters, wishing to save sentient beings in a world without a Buddha, he went to Kantō once again. Even if Ninshō's scholarship is weak, at the same time his compassion is very deep, and therefore he has been able to accomplish great deeds and establish the Buddha-dharma to such an extent.[42]

But evidently, even after returning to Saidaiji, Ninshō at first still had doubts about his own capacity for such scholarly training and how he could best serve the temple. In the *Gakushōki* entry for 1243/7/22, Eison writes:

> Ninshō (Ryōkanbō) vowed after leaving the household to spread the dharma and benefit sentient beings. However, [he believed that] since his faculties were dull, even though he had begun to study he could not benefit other people. Thus it was his solemn wish to travel to China, gather *vinaya* texts and commentaries, and thereby contribute broadly to future students.[43]

Ultimately, Eison dissuades Ninshō from this plan and convinces him to stay at Saidaiji and study Ritsu there, much as he had overcome Ninshō's initial resistance to formal entry into Saidaiji a few years earlier. However, if Eison influenced Ninshō toward a more settled monastic life and scholarly training, Ninshō also influenced Eison regarding the merits (or merit) of combining social welfare with cultic activities. Before the initial encounter with Ninshō, there is scant indication in Eison's autobiography of his involvement in the

[42] Tanaka 1971, p. 200.

[43] SEDS, p. 19. The third passage in which Eison refers to Ninshō's struggles with scholarship appears in the *Chōmonshū*, in a parable about the virtues of compassion rather than excessive rationalization. For the original passage, see Tanaka 1971, pp. 216–17.

cults of specific deities and saints, nor any mention of social welfare activities. Yet as indicated earlier, in response to Ninshō's request, Eison joined him in dedicating his first Mañjuśrī image at the Gakuanji west-side *hinin* community on 1240/3/6. After Ninshō formally entered Saidaiji, they performed a similar Mañjuśrī offering ceremony (*kuyō* 供養) at the Miwa 三輪 community on 1241/11/18 with the help of Keijitsu 継実 (n.d.), a monk acquainted with Ninshō.

Eison's remarks on that ceremony clarify his own movement toward the position Ninshō demonstrated in their initial dialogue:

> At that time, I reflected, "To distance oneself from fame and profit and perform such pure good deeds—nothing surpasses this." I shall compose a Mañjuśrī image, enshrine it, and perform an offering ceremony at the Wani 和爾 community near my compassionate mother's gravesite.[44]

Eison fulfilled this plan the next year, on 1242/1/25. A few months later, they held another Mañjuśrī assembly, at the Kitayama 北山 community on 1242/3/25. In the second month of 1243, they held a second offering ceremony at Gakuanji, just before a collective one at Ōjidō no Ichiba 大路堂の市庭 on 2/25 to commemorate the ceremonies at all four *hinin* communities. Finally, on 1244/2/25 they carried out their largest assembly to date, when they held a collective ceremony for seven Yamato communities and offered rice gruel to more than one thousand *hinin* at Imasatono 今里野, in fulfillment of a vow made by Jōsen 乗詮 (n.d.).[45] The next day, Eison joined Ninshō in carrying out the thirteenth-year memorial rite for Ninshō's mother. Such ceremonies dedicating Mañjuśrī images and providing offerings to *hinin* thus became a hallmark of Eison's order, continuing throughout his lifetime.

[44] SEDS, p. 16.

[45] Jōsen, like Keijitsu, was an acquaintance of Ninshō's. A connection between this collective ceremony proposed by Jōsen and the completion of Ninshō's own vow is clear in that it was for seven simultaneously and on the next day, they performed the thirteenth-year memorial service for Ninshō's mother. See the *Gakushōki* entries for 1244/2/25 and 2/26 (SEDS, p. 19), as well as the entry for 1241/8, which records Jōsen's initial offer to assist Ninshō (SEDS, p. 16). Also significant for understanding Ninshō's influence on the Saidaiji order even at this early stage is that his acquaintance both with Jōsen and with Keijitsu, who sponsored the 1241/11/18 ceremony at Miwa, appears to have led to their association with Eison's movement (Hosokawa 1999, pp. 125–26, n. 8; pp. 126–27, n. 11).

PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS AND THE EMULATION OF GYŌKI

As noted in the previous section, Ninshō clearly influenced Eison regarding the synthesis of charitable relief activities, memorial rites, and the Mañjuśrī cult, while Eison moved Ninshō toward greater emphasis on scholarship and the precepts. Accordingly, as Ninshō became integrated into the Saidaiji order, the two came to share the aspects of Mañjuśrī faith detailed earlier. However, one aspect of social welfare activities and the Mañjuśrī cult in which they continued to differ concerns public works projects (*doboku jigyō* 土木事業) and their emulation of Mañjuśrī's most renowned Japanese manifestation, Gyōki. Thus, although it is frequently asserted that both Ninshō and Eison had "*hijiri*-type" characteristics and both emulated Gyōki, more careful distinctions are required in this regard.

By the time Ninshō and Eison began their Mañjuśrī assemblies and charitable relief work in the 1240s, Gyōki had long been renowned for extensive construction activities, including public works projects. The eleventh-century *Gyōki bosatsuden* 行基菩薩伝, for example, claims "that Gyōki was involved in the construction of six bridges, nine road-side shelters, forty-nine practice halls, two ports, fifteen reservoirs, seven irrigation canals, and three wells."[46] The *Hokke genki* 法華験記, compiled by Chingen 鎮源 (n.d.) from 1040 to 1044, records that:

> After studying how paddy fields should be farmed and irrigated, he dug ponds for reservoirs and built irrigation dikes. Hearing of this, the people came to help him, and the jobs were finished in no time at all. Even now, farmers reap the benefits of his projects.[47]

Ninshō certainly shares in this image when his disciple Chōmyō records in the *Daitokufu* that his teacher constructed 189 bridges and seventy-one roads, dug thirty-three wells, and built bath-houses, treatment facilities (*byōshitsu* 病室), and *hinin* dwellings at five places each.[48] Among these, Ninshō is known to have built an ambitious medical facility at Kuwagayatsu 桑谷 in Kamakura in 1287 as well as the first treatment facility for horses in Japan in 1298.[49] To give some sense of the scale of the Kuwagayatsu facility, according to

[46] Augustine 2005, pp. 38–39.
[47] Translation by Janet Goodwin; see Goodwin 1994, p. 30.
[48] For the original *Daitokufu* passage, see Tanaka 1973, p. 52.
[49] Wajima 1959, pp. 128–29.

the biography of Ninshō in the *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書 compiled by Kokan Shiren 虎関師錬 (1278–1346) in 1322, over a twenty-year period 46,800 people were cured while 10,450 people died there.[50] Ninshō is also often credited with the original construction of the oldest relief facility for lepers in Japan, the Kitayama Jūhachikendo 北山十八間戸 near Hannyaji. Although Ninshō's construction of the Kitayama Jūhachikendo may be legendary, it is significant that this legend would accrue to Ninshō, rather than to Eison, who had much more sustained involvement with *hinin* relief in the vicinity of Hannyaji.

In contrast with Ninshō, however, Eison is only known to have directly participated in one public works project during his long and multifaceted career, the repair of the Uji 宇治 bridge in Yamashiro 山城 Province in 1284. Moreover, it seems clear from Eison's account of his participation in this project that his primary motivation was not the practical benefits of the bridge so much as his desire to prohibit net fishing there. The account notes that when he was asked to partake in the Uji bridge repair, he at first refused three times because of his long-held distaste for lay projects. Yet as part of his commitment to the precept against taking life and his desire to save others from that transgression, Eison had long promoted the establishment of no-hunting and no-fishing zones. He thus finally agreed to oversee the repair of the bridge on the condition that the wicker net used there for fishing be destroyed.[51]

As Nakamura Hajime has detailed, Eison's reluctance to partake in public works projects was consistent with his commitment to the precepts: the *Vinaya in Four Parts* prohibited such projects due to the inevitability of killing living beings in the soil during construction.[52] In addition, Eison's avowed distaste for entanglement with lay authorities was a stance he would display on various occasions. This stance is exemplified in his often-cited reply to the leaders of the warrior government in 1262 when they offered to commend private estates (*shōen* 荘園) to Saidaiji during a momentous trip to Kantō. Eison reportedly replied, "I despise things that are attached to the world and prefer those that are unattached (*muen* 無縁). This is the expedient means (*hōben* 方便) to preserve the Buddhist law."[53] As I have argued elsewhere (Quinter 2006, chapter

[50] See the *Genkō shakusho* biography in Tsuji 1976, p. 285, for the original passage.

[51] For the full text of the Council of State directive (*daijōkanpu* 太政官符) dated 1284/2/27 and containing Eison's account, see Tsuji 1976, pp. 275–76. For an analysis of Eison's motivations in undertaking this project, with excerpts from the directive, see Oishio 1995, pp. 246–49.

[52] Nakamura 1964, pp. 82–88.

[53] Goodwin's translation (1994, p. 118); for the original quote, see the *Kantō ōkanki* 関東

3), this is largely a rhetorical stance, and remaining "unattached" to political authorities would prove more difficult to maintain in practice than in the ideal. What is most interesting here, however, is that Eison's involvement in social welfare projects would largely stop with a model he attributed to the *Wen-shu-shih-li pan-nieh-p'an ching* 文殊師利般涅槃経 (T no. 463; hereafter *Mañjuśrī Parinirvāṇa Sutra*), that of providing charitable relief to the "impoverished, solitary, or afflicted."[54] Eison identified these targets of compassionate deeds primarily with *hinin* such as beggars, orphans or elderly left on their own, and lepers or others with grave illnesses or physical impairments who had no regular means of support.

The contrast between Eison and Ninshō regarding the scope of their social welfare projects suggests the need for a reinterpretation of the two Shingon Ritsu leaders' emulations of Gyōki. The assessment of Ninshō as emulating a *kanjin hijiri* paradigm of Gyōki has strong support, based on his formative practices, his involvement with Chikurinji during the dramatic start of the Gyōki cult there, and the breadth of his public works activities. Although Gyōki had long been associated with charitable activities, the spotlight on his construction projects sharpened in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, with the compilation of the *Gyōki nenpu* 行基年譜 and the linking of Gyōki with Chōgen's renowned campaign to restore Tōdaiji.[55] Such accounts represented a significant elaboration of sparser accounts composed in Gyōki's own Nara period, and their historical reliability has been justifiably questioned.[56]

往還記 in SEDS, p. 91.

[54] In the *Gakushōki* entry for 1268/9, Eison described his proposal to his fellow monks for a grand "non-discriminatory" Mañjuśrī offering ceremony (*musha daie* 無遮大會), to be held on 1269/3/25 at Hannyaji, next to the Kitayama *hinin* community. In the entry, he quotes the following passage from this sutra: "The Buddha proclaimed to Bhadrapāla: 'The Dharma-Prince Mañjuśrī turns into an impoverished, solitary, or afflicted sentient being and appears before practitioners. When people call to mind Mañjuśrī, they should practice compassion. Those who practice compassion will thereby be able to see Mañjuśrī.'" Eison then explains: "You should know that compassion and Mañjuśrī are two different words for the same thing. To promote compassion, Mañjuśrī appears in the form of a suffering being. This is the basis for the origins of such charitable acts (*segyō* 施行)." For the *Gakushōki* passage, see SEDS, p. 34. The sutra passage Eison quoted can be found in T 14: 481a28–b3.

[55] On Chōgen and Gyōki, see Goodwin 1994, p. 30 and chapter 4, especially pp. 78–80 and 95; Kleine 1997, pp. 36–37. See Augustine 2005 on the *Gyōki nenpu* and the evolution of Gyōki's biography to the medieval period. All three studies make clear that this image of Gyōki gained momentum in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

[56] Augustine 2005. Here, though, it should be noted that Augustine does not privilege the

However, as Janet Goodwin has demonstrated, the increasing emphasis on this image of Gyōki in the late Heian and Kamakura periods is indicative of the growing importance of *kanjin* campaigns.[57] As is so often the case with saints' biographies, the historical significance of Gyōki's biography lies more in the varying appropriation of that biography over time than in what he may or may not have actually done in his own lifetime.

Yet we should recognize that it is primarily Ninshō's biography, rather than Eison's, that belongs to this strengthening *kanjin hijiri* image of Gyōki and monks such as Chōgen who promoted it. In fact, we could say that Ninshō's location within a tradition extending from Chōgen was given public recognition in his own time with his appointment by lay authorities as the fifteenth *daikanjinshiki* 大勧進職 holder for Tōdaiji in the eighth month of 1293, an office that began with Chōgen. The appointment reflects the renown Ninshō shared with Chōgen for their ability to mobilize both monastics and lay people in large-scale projects.[58] Thus, when Goodwin writes regarding the ideals of *kanjin hijiri* that "Religious and secular projects, moreover, were not necessarily distinguished or viewed as contradictions,"[59] this is a fitting description of Ninshō's approach. For Eison, however, this is the very distinction he did make regarding construction projects, viewing temple restoration projects as consistent with his status as a Ritsu monk but not secular public works projects. Here, Eison draws a line that his most famous disciple would not.

EISON'S EMULATION OF MAÑJUŚRĪ AND "ERASURE" OF GYŌKI

In largely limiting his involvement in social welfare activities to the *Mañjuśrī Parinirvāṇa Sutra* blueprint, in contrast to Ninshō and other so-called *kanjin hijiri*, we might say that Eison was more interested in modeling himself directly after the deity than the saint said to have incarnated that deity. Admittedly, this

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Nara-period accounts of Gyōki's life as being necessarily more historically reliable. Rather, to paraphrase the perspective throughout his 2005 study, his broader point is that even the earlier accounts show a selective focus on certain aspects of Gyōki's life to the exclusion of others, reflecting the values of the compilers and their time period much as later accounts reflect theirs.

[57] Goodwin 1994.

[58] On this appointment, see Oishio 1995, pp. 305–6, and Matsuo 2004, pp. v, 160–63. See Hosokawa 1988, pp. 181–83, for the appointment of Ritsu monks to this post more generally and Goodwin 1994, pp. 96–100, 110, on Chōgen and this post.

[59] Goodwin 1994, p. 141.

is a fine distinction. However, the plethora of Eison's references to Mañjuśrī coupled with the scarcity of his explicit references to Gyōki—despite much direct and indirect evidence for Shingon Ritsu participation in both cults—suggests a curious "erasure" of the earlier saint and substitution of Eison himself.

Eison's relative silence on Gyōki and the manner in which he substituted himself for Gyōki was first pointed out in an insightful article by Kanbayashi Naoko. Aptly noting that no direct references to Gyōki appear in the *Gakushōki*,[60] Kanbayashi nevertheless finds ample evidence for Eison's participation in the cult of the saint, as do most other scholars of Eison's movement. The most commonly cited evidence for Eison's strong Gyōki faith includes the facts that: (1) Gyōki had long been hailed as a manifestation of Mañjuśrī and Eison participated energetically in the Mañjuśrī cult; (2) like Eison and his disciples, Gyōki was renowned for social welfare activities and wide-ranging involvement with commoners and the poor; and (3) Gyōki was viewed as a model for monks such as Eison and Ninshō engaged in temple fund-raising campaigns and construction projects. Additional evidence is often found in various other historical indicators. One is Eison's involvement in the restoration of temples associated with Gyōki, particularly Ebaraji 家原寺. Ebaraji was considered Gyōki's birthplace, and Eison and his colleague Kakujō led the first separate-ordination ceremony for their new ordination lineage there in 1245.[61] Another indicator is found in a directive (*inzen* 院宣) by Retired Emperor Kameyama 亀山 (1249–1305) to posthumously award the title Kōshō Bosatsu 興正菩薩 to Eison. In that directive, dated 1300/7/4, the retired emperor specifically cited Gyōki's "Bosatsu" title as a precedent.[62] Also, in 1302, a package purportedly containing Gyōki's remains and fragments of a sutra copy attributed to Gyōki were inserted into the Saidaiji Mañjuśrī statue dedicated for Eison's thirteenth-year memorial service. Finally, Ninshō's connections to Chikurinji, where the dramatic excavation of Gyōki's mausoleum was carried out in 1235, as well as his and other disciples' energetic involvement in public works projects are also often cited as evidence for the founder's participation in the cult.

In general terms, I support Kanbayashi's and other scholars' association of Eison with the Gyōki cult, and, as detailed below, I find many aspects of Kanbayashi's analysis insightful. However, there are problems with the commonly cited evidence as well. First, it is noteworthy that all the aforemen-

[60] Kanbayashi 2003, p. 97.
[61] See the *Gakushōki* entry for the middle of the ninth month in 1245; SEDS, p. 20.
[62] SEDS, p. 203.

tioned indicators constitute indirect evidence for Eison's *own* Gyōki faith. That Eison's disciples and other contemporaries such as Retired Emperor Kameyama participated directly in the Gyōki cult or associated Eison with the Nara-period saint is clear enough. But the evidence does little to show how Eison himself conceived of Gyōki. It was Eison's disciples (including Ninshō, who was actively involved in the project) who conceived of the plans for the 1302 Saidaiji Mañjuśrī image and inserted the objects associated with Gyōki. Yet, while we have considerable documentary evidence for the items inserted into the earlier Hannyaji Mañjuśrī statue,[63] there is no mention of any items associated with Gyōki. This difference is telling, particularly considering that the Hannyaji image was conceived by Eison and was consciously used by his disciples as a model for the Saidaiji one.

The other commonly cited evidence is also not as specific as one might assume, given how widespread the notion is that Eison emulated Gyōki in his activities. It is true that by Eison's time Gyōki was probably the most famous Japanese saint believed to have been a manifestation of Mañjuśrī. However, as made clear even in Eison's own multiple references to manifestations of Mañjuśrī in the *Hannyaji Monju engi*, the *Hannyaji Monju Bosatsu zō zōryū ganmon*, and the *Monju kōshiki* attributed to him, there were many recorded examples of Mañjuśrī's manifestations in sources available to thirteenth-century Japanese monks. Similarly, regarding charitable relief activities, Gyōki's participation was indeed renowned by then. But as Oishio and Sasaki Kaoru in particular have shown, Eison did not need to leap all the way back to the Nara period to find inspiration for this.[64] Neither factor is evidence for why Eison should have sought to emulate Gyōki in particular. Finally, concerning the construction projects associated with both Gyōki and Eison, as I argued earlier, it is necessary to distinguish Eison's attitudes from those of his disciples concerning such public works as bridge, road, and port construction projects. The evidence in this regard again points more to Eison's disciples' emulation

[63] Three different thirteenth-century sources list the items inserted in the Hannyaji image: the *Gakushōki* entries for 1267/7/20 and 7/22 (SEDS, pp. 31–32) as well as the 1267 *Hannyaji Monju engi* 般若寺文殊縁起 and the 1269 *Hannyaji Monju Bosatsu zō zōryū ganmon* 般若寺文殊菩薩像造立願文 composed by Eison. The *Hannyaji Monju engi* can be found in Ōta et al. 1976–78, vol. 3, 135a–136a, and the *Hannyaji Monju Bosatsu zō zōryū ganmon* in Takeuchi 1971–, vol. 14, pp. 24–26 [doc. 10404]. For annotated English translations of these latter two texts, and additional analysis of the Hannyaji Mañjuśrī statue and offering ceremonies, see Quinter 2007.

[64] See Oishio 1995 and Sasaki 1997, pp. 85–89.

of Gyōki than his own.[65]

That said, Eison's wide-ranging temple construction and restoration efforts arguably provide better evidence for his participation in the Gyōki cult. He was indeed vigorously involved in such activities, including various sites associated with Gyōki. To the degree a *kanjin hijiri* is understood as one involved in campaigns to restore temples specifically, there is some accuracy to the portrayal of Eison as a *kanjin hijiri*-type figure. Here, too, though, the evidence is less clear-cut than one might think. First, we have to recognize that a great many temples and other locales of Buddhist practice were associated with Gyōki by this time, all over Japan. Given how extensive Shingon Ritsu temple restoration efforts were, it was inevitable that many sites would be associated with Gyōki. Second, Eison was often invited to participate in these projects, including the restoration of Ebaraji.[66] Eison's participation in such a project in and of itself does not indicate his own particular preference for Gyōki or temples associated with him.

Despite these problems with the indirect evidence for Eison's emulation of Gyōki and his status as a *kanjin hijiri*, we must recognize the one instance in which Eison does directly refer to Gyōki and the context of that reference. In the *Hannyaji Monju engi,* Eison insists that "the spread of the various Mahayana schools was entirely due to [Mañjuśrī's] power," and he mentions

[65] In addition to the commonly cited evidence for Eison's Gyōki faith referred to above, Kanbayashi also cites the remains of a document, the *Gyōki Bosatsu gosangūki* 行基菩薩御参宮記 (hereafter *Gyōki sangūki*), that was inserted into a small shrine for two ornate mirrors housed at Saidaiji (Kanbayashi 2003, p. 98). The *Gyōki sangūki* was one of eight texts inserted into the shrine, and these documents show that the shrine and the mirrors, representing the *mishōtai* 御正体 ("True Body") of the deity, were connected to Eison's three pilgrimages to Ise 伊勢 Shrine from 1268 to 1280. As the title indicates, the document in question concerns a reputed pilgrimage by Gyōki to Ise Shrine. But here too, the evidence cited is problematic. Only two of the eight documents in question can be directly attributed to Eison, and at least one of the eight was indisputably written and inserted later: it begins with a reference to Eison as "Kōshō Bosatsu," the title awarded in 1300, ten years after his death. There is thus no reason to assume that the *Gyōki sangūki* was penned or even inserted by Eison himself (see Kondō 1985 for a fuller discussion of these documents and their colophons, particularly p. 139, which quotes the legible portion of the *Gyōki sangūki*).

[66] Eison does not mention the restoration of Ebaraji in his autobiography. However, the *Saidai chokushi Kōshō Bosatsu gyōjitsu nenpu* 西大勅諡興正菩薩行実年譜 , a chronological record of Eison's activities compiled in the Genroku 元禄 period (1688–1704), records the restoration as beginning in 1245. But even if we accept this account, it should be noted that this source specifically indicates that Eison was *invited* to restore the temple (SEDS, p. 124).

six examples, referring in order to Shingon, Hossō, Tendai, Kegon, Sanron, and Zen transmissions. Eison finishes his account of Mañjuśrī's manifestations with his appearance in Japan as a starving man before Shōtoku Taishi and as Gyōki, of whom he writes, "On still another occasion, [Mañjuśrī] manifested as Gyōki and assisted the external activity of Emperor Shōmu 聖武 [701–756]."[67] Ironically, despite all the indirect evidence cited by previous scholars for Eison's emulation of Gyōki, little mention is made of this direct reference to Gyōki. Notably, this reference does demonstrate Eison's belief in Gyōki as a manifestation of Mañjuśrī and at least implies Gyōki's involvement in the Great Buddha construction campaign, which was sponsored by Emperor Shōmu. The most important question here, then, is not whether Eison shared these commonly held notions of Gyōki, or even whether in varying indirect and direct fashions he participated in the Gyōki cult that was so popular in his lifetime. Rather, much as Kanbayashi astutely asks regarding Eison's complete silence on Gyōki in the *Gakushōki*, the question is why didn't he refer to Gyōki more often?[68]

Kanbayashi's arguments concerning this relative silence are compelling. She suggests that Eison was demonstrating a "principle of covert substitution" (*surikae no ronri* すり替えの論理) by which he superimposed his own image over Gyōki's,[69] thereby leading others to view him as a founder and "living Buddha" in the vein of Gyōki. Gyōki had similarly been referred to as a "living bodhisattva," and he was widely considered one of the founding fathers of Japanese Buddhism by Eison's time. Kanbayashi's definition of a "founder" or "ancestral teacher" (*soshi* 祖師) in the medieval period was not just as a founder of a religious sect but as a salvific master for both the present and future generations.[70] Pointing particularly to the 1235 mausoleum excavation episode and the portrayal of Gyōki's prophecies in Jakumetsu's account, she demonstrates this conception of Gyōki in the medieval period. She also singles out parallels with the reported discovery of prophetic writings attributed to Shōtoku Taishi near his mausoleum in 1054, 1228, and 1233.[71] Much in keeping with portrayals of Gyōki, Shōtoku Taishi was commonly regarded as a founding father of Japanese Buddhism, and his cult also gained great popularity in the medieval period.

[67] Ōta et al. 1976–78, vol. 3, p. 135a.
[68] Kanbayashi 2003, p. 97.
[69] Ibid., pp. 106–7.
[70] Ibid., p. 94.
[71] Ibid., pp. 100–106.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, Eison was associated with the cults of both Shōtoku Taishi and Gyōki, and Kanbayashi points to Eison's faith in these two patriarchs of Japanese Buddhism as evidence of his participation in the medieval cult of founders.[72] She also demonstrates Eison's self-construction as well as others' belief in him as such a founder, capable of miraculous salvific deeds in both the present and the future. To do so, she draws on (1) Eison's self-construction through his composition of the *Gakushōki*, particularly his descriptions of spontaneous relic manifestations accompanying his activities; (2) his reputed conferral of the autobiography to his six leading disciples, as recorded in the *Saidai chokushi Kōshō Bosatsu gyōjitsu nenpu* (hereafter *Nenpu*);[73] and (3) the miraculous conception of Eison evident in the 1280 statue made of him by his disciples.[74] Finally, Kanbayashi argues that by metaphorically aligning himself with Gyōki and having faith in Gyōki as a salvific force for the masses, Eison uses the "concealed Gyōki" to help render orthodox his own charitable relief activities and construct his image as a living Buddha within the cult of founders.

Kanbayashi's observations here are insightful. As studies by Fujii Masao (1986), Matsuo (1995, 1997, 1998c), and others have shown, the cult of founders was indeed thriving in Eison's time. Matsuo, in fact, identifies strong founder faith as one of the characteristics of the reclusive monks' groups that he sees as constituting "Kamakura New Buddhism," including Eison's. The popularity of the Gyōki and Shōtoku Taishi cults among Eison's and other Buddhist movements in the Kamakura period is also evident.[75] Moreover, Eison's activities clearly reveal his own faith in "living Buddhas" (*shōjin butsu* 生身仏) and bodhisattvas, particularly as expressed in miraculous statues serving as such living deities. The connections between Eison's own activities in this regard and those of his disciples in constructing the 1280 statue of Eison were made most convincingly in Nakao Takashi's influential 1993 article on Eison's *shōjin butsu* faith. Here, Nakao similarly argues that miraculous relic manifestations played significant roles in Eison's ability to attract followers

[72] Ibid., p. 97.

[73] See the *Nenpu* entry for 1285/12/8 (SEDS, pp. 190–91). Kanbayashi excerpts most of the entry at the beginning of the article (Kanbayashi 2003, p. 95).

[74] On this statue and the miraculous conceptions of it, see in particular Nakao 1993 and Brinker 1997–98.

[75] To cite just a few of the many studies including analysis of Gyōki and Shōtoku Taishi faith in the medieval period, see Augustine 2005 and Inoue 1997 on Gyōki and Narita 1964, Hayashi 1980, and Lee 2007 on the Shōtoku Taishi cult.

and in perceptions of Eison as a living Buddha.

Where Kanbayashi goes one step further than Nakao is in her apt portrayal of the *Gakushōki* as a consciously constructed self-portrait of Eison's and the relic manifestations as a kind of necessary "fiction" to create the image of Eison as a living Buddha. As Kanbayashi argues, there are many activities of Eison's not recorded in the *Gakushōki*. His construction of this document thus clearly shows a process of selection and rejection, and we need to consider why he would choose to record certain things (such as the relic manifestations) while omitting others (such as any direct mention of Gyōki).[76] Finally, the possibility that Eison did compose and confer his autobiography as a kind of last testament to his disciples, intended to serve as a model for the activities of a bodhisattva, is high, even if caution is warranted regarding the specific details in the late seventeenth-century *Nenpu* account. Thus Kanbayashi's emphasis on the importance of addressing who the *Gakushōki* was intended for and why is laudable.[77]

However, I would like to conclude by taking Kanbayashi's arguments one step further regarding the identification Eison was trying to establish through the *Gakushōki* and his other writings. There is indeed evidence to suggest that Eison was trying to *implicitly* associate himself with Gyōki, and thereby help legitimate his activities. Eison's relative lack of direct reference to Gyōki in his writings may indeed be designed to lead others to make the connection themselves, as Kanbayashi suggests. We could view this as an act of "erasure" or "strikethrough," in which the earlier saint is at once concealed yet rendered visible beneath the erased or crossed-out part of the narrative. At the same time, we must recognize that the one instance in his published writings where Eison does explicitly refer to Gyōki is simply as one of many manifestations of Mañjuśrī. Based on his accounts, these manifestations served not only to promote charitable acts but to legitimate various Mahayana schools and ensure the continuity of transmission in this vast time between Buddhas. And as Paul Groner points out, from the time of Ninshō's entrance into Eison's order, references to Mañjuśrī in the *Gakushōki* "soon outnumber those of any

[76] Kanbayashi 2003, pp. 94–97.

[77] Groner's remarks on the purpose of the *Gakushōki* are also apt, when he similarly notes that Eison "may have intended to bequeath to his disciples an account of his life legitimating his new ordination lineage and monastic order. Therefore, the autobiography was likely compiled in much the same spirit as were various accounts of other patriarchs in the Kamakura period" (2001, p. 116).

other buddha or bodhisattva."[78] In part, this is due to the detail devoted to the 1267 Hannyaji Mañjuśrī image. Yet this degree of attention itself demonstrates Eison's active process of "selection and rejection" in his autobiography. Given the preponderance of explicit attention to Mañjuśrī here and elsewhere, I suggest that the stronger identification he sought was with the deity Gyōki was said to incarnate, Mañjuśrī. And therein lies the deeper legitimization Eison simultaneously sought for his founding of a new monastic order and his activities more broadly.[79]

ABBREVIATIONS

SEDS *Saidaiji Eison denki shūsei* 西大寺叡尊伝記集成 , ed. Nara Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyūjo 奈良国立文化財研究所 . Kyoto: Hōzōkan. 1977.

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵経 . 85 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 et al. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. 1924–34.

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[78] Groner 2001, p. 133.

[79] Here, I do not intend to slight the significant role also played by Śākyamuni faith in providing legitimization for Eison's activities. As with Mañjuśrī, there is also evidence to suggest a superimposition of Eison's activities with those of Śākyamuni, particularly in the *Chōmonshū*. However, analysis of Eison's Śākyamuni faith is beyond the scope of this study, and I would refer the reader to the work of such scholars as Narita (1963), Matsuo (1996, pp. 84–95; 1998b), McCallum (1996), and Groner (2001, pp. 121–33).

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